

The Sacramento Union



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Japanese return to Tule Lake camp

By PAUL BARNES
Staff Writer

Seiichi Otow still gets emotional when he talks about Tule Lake.

He was held there at the Tule Lake War Relocation Authority Camp while other Americans were off fighting World War II.

His feelings don't include hate or bitterness, though. There is disappointment, but it's mingled with forgiveness.

He is reliving those days now because he is helping to plan a return to Tule Lake. The Northern California Japanese Christian Church Federation is sponsoring the trip back, the second one in three years.

The trip is planned for May 22-23 and the main reason for going back is the rededication of a steel cross that was cemented to a mountain top above the old camp. It is also a trip recognizing the repeal of Executive Order No. 9066 that called for the relocation of all Japanese.

The steel cross was planted May 25, 1974 when the first return trip was planned. That cross was donated by the surrounding residents who missed an old wooden cross placed in the same place by the Japanese who lived at the camp during the Easter of 1943.

The wooden cross remained standing

until a storm knocked it down in 1973. When residents of the area heard that the Japanese were returning for a pilgrimage, they purchased the steel cross and had it installed in time for the visitors to see it.

The new cross was cemented into the same hole where the old cross stood with a piece of the old cross embedded into the cement.

A brass plaque with the name of the restorers was placed at the foot of the cross with the inscription, "May It Stand Until The Lord Returns."

Other services will be held at the Klamath Falls/Tule Lake WRA grave site.

Anyone is welcome to make the pilgrimage and information on costs may be obtained by calling Rev. Hei Takarabe of the Parkview Presbyterian Church at 443-4464 or 428-7663.

Part of Otow's emotional response to the trip back to Tule Lake is inspired by the people who replanted the cross.

"Their efforts," he said, "make us wander what is the real meaning of this particular cross overlooking the camp site. To us it reveals that, in spite of internment, there is a sharing of God's love, patience, comfort and forgiveness among men."

The New Cross . . .

Sacramento Bee, May 18, 1976

A Pilgrimage To Tule Lake



The cross high atop Castle Peak

By WALT WILEY
Bee Staff Writer

NEWELL, Modoc Co. — Farmers who homesteaded on this former lake bed after World War II can't recall a time when there wasn't a cross atop Castle Peak.

The one that was there when they arrived blew down a few years ago, and they replaced it with a new one, made of steel embedded in concrete.

Now they are sprucing up the new cross in anticipation of the arrival this weekend of a group that was there when the original cross went up.

They are Japanese Americans who were held at a relocation camp at Newell in the flat bed of Tule Lake.

"It's no monument to the camp," said farmer Paul Christy. "It's just this country doesn't seem right without the cross there, so when it blew down in '73, we put another one up."

Stockton-Sacramento Japanese American Centennial Committee Cross Dedication Trip



Bee Photos by Walt Wiley

Paul Christy with steel cross he and friends erected



Japanese Visitors

5-23-76

Rev. Kay Sakaguchi, El Cerrito, Calif., moderator for Northern California Japanese Christian Church Federation, foreground, and Rev. Hei Takarabe, pastor of Parkview Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, conducted services at Linkville Cemetery Saturday in front of the graves of 10 babies and one adult who died at the Newell Japanese Relocation Center during World War II. Today the pilgrimage of Japanese-Americans will have dedication service and Bicentennial observances at 9 a.m. at the Newell Elementary School. The pilgrimage is the third to be made to the relocation center in three years.

"It was all informal — a bunch of us just got together and did it. There was no church or other organization behind it."

He said the new cross has had scores of initials scratched into its paint over the last two years, so it will be repainted for the arrival of a group of Japanese Americans coming on a pilgrimage to dedicate the new cross this weekend.

During the pilgrimage, sponsored by the Northern California Japanese Christian Church Federation, the group will also recognize the repeal of Executive Order 9066, the order by President Franklin Roosevelt that set up the camps to house persons of Japanese descent, including thousands of American citizens.

"I remember when we first came here that camp was huge. Each one of us who drew a homestead got one of the barracks from the camp to use as a house," said Christy.

"We're still living in ours. I cut it in half with a hand saw and paid \$300 to have it hauled to our homestead."

Most of the remnants, except for the houses that have been converted from barracks, are gone from the old camp now, but Christy said the area residents will likely see to it that the cross remains.

"When you consider that the original cross was made from railroad ties and was carried to the top of that rock by hand by a bunch of people who were being kept there against their will, it's kind of awe inspiring," said Christy.

"When we put the steel cross up we were able to haul it on my boom truck most of the way to the top, and just that last stretch where we had to carry it by hand was quite a bit of effort.

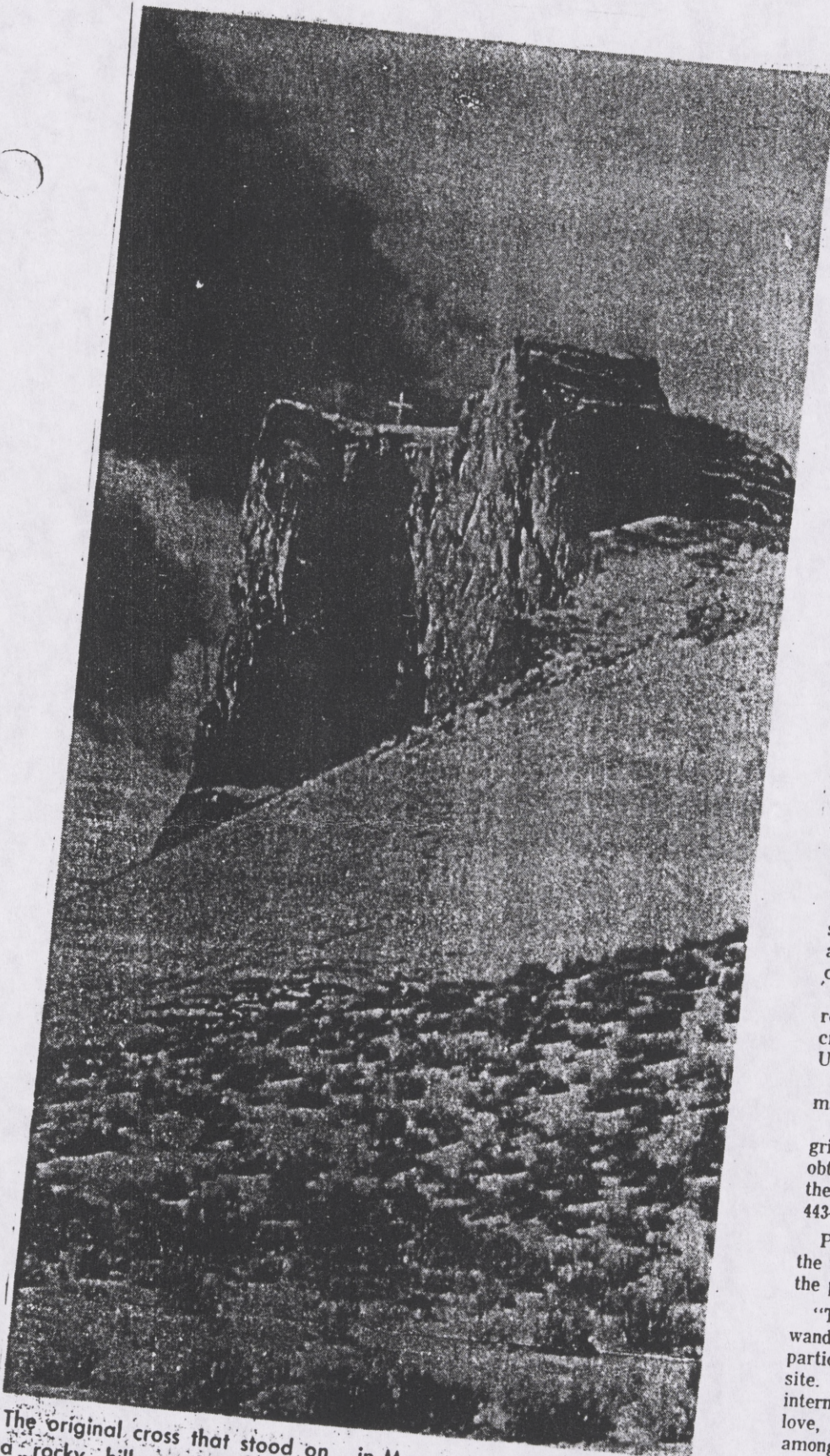
"Those people must have been awfully determined to do all that with that heavy wooden cross and no help."

He said Tule Lake area farmers tend to view the fact that the relocation camp once existed there as a bit of history from before their time.

"But the cross is something else again. It's a part of this country that belongs here," he said on a recent trip to the top of the butte to inspect the structure.

He pointed to the concrete base where a bronze plaque bears the names of Christy and his neighbors who placed it there.

The plaque tells how the Japanese Americans placed the original cross at the site, and bears the inscription "May it stand..."



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Japanese return

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Sacramento Union

Replaces World War II Cross

Symbol Of Hope Erected

Photos By
Doug Higgs

By RUTH KING
H&N Correspondent

NEWELL — There is a new white cross-symbol of hope in the Christian World—atop the craggy summit of Castle Rock across California Highway 139 near the Newell community.

It replaces, on the exact spot, a heavy wooden cross carried up the steep slopes of the peninsula by Japanese-Americans, who spent the years of World War II confined in the War Relocation Center at Newell, to worship on Easter Sunday in 1943.

The original cross, fashioned of a railroad tie and reinforced with heavy timbers, blew down in November, 1973. Part of the base, set in cement, remained at the site. The rest lies shattered at the foot of the cliff far below.

The loss was discovered by Toby Duran Sr., manager of the nearby Newell Migrant Labor Camp, and an idea was born.

"It was a January thought," said Dick Bunch, owner of Bunch's Garage in Tulelake, who had been told by Duran that the old cross was gone. It was a thought that grew and grew, spreading to some of the ranchers who had farmed almost in the shadow of the old cross for more than 30 years. They and their families, among them teenage sons, also missed the cross that had brought solace and some measure of peace to so many of the Japanese-Americans during those long years of the war.

It was decided by mutual agreement to "do something about it."

Duran furnished the surplus, eight-inch steel pipe. John Prosser, a rancher who had

completed a two-year course in welding technology at Oregon Institute of Technology, offered to do the welding to make the cross secure against future winds.

The pipe was hauled to the Paul Christy Ranch shop where young Kenneth Christy, 17, a senior in Tulelake High School, gave a helping hand. The actual welding took "around two days." There are no openings to catch the wind. Coats of white paint were added.

The sons of Mr. and Mrs. Bunch, Mike, 16, a sophomore at Tulelake High School; Tim 18, a senior; an older brother, Mike, sophomore at the University of California, Davis; and Ken Christy, saw the project through to the last rock shoveled into the concrete base that supports the cross.

On Saturday afternoon, May 11, all was ready for the final phase—the transportation of the 350-pound symbol of faith to the top of the peninsula that rises abruptly from the floor of the Tulelake-Newell Valley.

Here would be the culmination of dedication and response to a deeply felt need for assurance in these changing times. The rough old cross so long ago, had filled the need through summer sun and winter winds.

Workers gathered at the Christy home. The carefully padded Cross was loaded on a boom truck for the trek up the steep, winding road toward its goal. Several four-wheel-drive vehicles, carrying spectators, including wives and mothers of those involved, followed the slow-moving truck as it lurched up the tedious, unpaved road, climbing, climbing to the foot of

a 200-yard shale rock slide.

From here the cross was carried and hoisted to the rim. A vehicle driven by Duran had reached the top with tools, cement and water. The chiseled-out pit where the old cross had been placed under more difficult circumstances was ready.

Cement was mixed in a metal wheelbarrow and the shining new cross, weighted at the base, was lifted into place; the cross arms steadied by ropes in young hands.

A bit of the wooden cross was placed in the hardening mixture where space was left for other mementoes in a metal cannister. Softly spoken suggestions were made; the spectators were silent.

There was a sense of reverence as the ropes and burlap protection were removed.

The new cross stood 18 feet tall with 12½-foot cross arms flung wide above the checkerboard farmlands below. The first hint of spring's rebirth was greening in the grain fields. Waters of Tule Lake glistened in the bright afternoon sunlight.

The portion of the wooden cross left intact, its nails rusted, will be on exhibit in the museum at the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fairgrounds.

A brass plaque made by Bunch has been placed at the base of the new cross. Burned deep into the metal are the names in alphabetical order—Dick Bunch, Mike Bunch, Richard Bunch, Tim Bunch, Paul Christy, Ken Christy, Roby Duran Sr., John Prosser—and the inscription, "May It Stand Until the Lord Returns."



The Peninsula—The new cross was placed at the top of The Peninsula, shown here from ground level. The

new cross replaced an old cross, which had stood there since 1943.



Rope Tow—Helping to bring the new cross up the steep slope are Mike Bunch, foreground, and Toby Duran Sr., who are pulling on a rope tied to the cross.



On The Road—The new cross was transported most of the way by a boom truck. Pictured here are Paul

Christy, left, and his son, Ken Christy. John Prosser and Ken Christy created the new cross.



Hard Climb—The new cross, weighing 350 pounds, is being carried up a steep,

shale rock slope by, from left, John Prosser, Richard Bunch, Tim Bunch and

Ken Christy and, behind them, Dick Bunch and Paul Christy.



Going Up—This group of Tulelake and Newell residents placed this new cross on top of The Peninsula, south of Tulelake, last weekend.

Dec 7, 1944, 45 Buddhist priests
took part in a memorial service for the
war dead at the Hsi-School, a quarter of a mile
this was the peak number for Buddhist
priests in camp, since in Dec. 1944
the Supreme Court ruled that detainees are
free to the West Coast